

## Care guide

### Cape York Head Squeaker (*Goodangarkia praesinus*)



Cape York Head Squeakers are found in far north Queensland in suitable habitats from Cairns to Cape York Peninsula. They are robust katydids and grow to around 40mm long. Both sexes are similar in size and have short wings barely covering the abdomen. Adult females have a long sabre-like ovipositor (structure for depositing eggs) making the sexes very easy to differentiate.

The name 'head squeaker' comes from their ability to create a squeaking noise from their head when disturbed. Both sexes can make this noise, but how they create it is not well understood.

These katydids are omnivorous and are equipped with large powerful mandibles that enable them to feed on a variety of food types. They feed on an assortment of plant material including seeds, particularly those of tall grasses which seems to be their preferred habitat. They are opportunistic predators and will readily prey upon smaller insects that they are able to overpower. They also feed upon the eggs of other invertebrates including those of spiders (image above).

In order to reproduce, male Cape York Head Squeakers will transfer a spermatophore to the females. A spermatophore is a white-coloured mass that can sometimes be seen at the tip of the female's abdomen after mating has occurred. It contains sperm to fertilise the eggs. Females lay elongated rice-like eggs in the ground using their ovipositor. The young will hatch out looking like miniature versions of their parents, and will shed their exoskeletons to grow. This species is a long-lived katydid, with a life-span of well over 12 months. Adults can live at least 8 months in captivity.

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**Food:** Katydid Food and Predatory Katydid Food, grass seed, and dead insects. They will nibble on a variety of domestic garden plants including Spider Lily *Hymenocallis* spp. (These plants also make good captive habitat for these katydids)

**Water:** Mist spray the enclosure once a day. This will keep the enclosure damp and the humidity high. The katydids will drink from the moisture on the foliage and branches if they require it.

**Enclosure:** An enclosure at least 30cm high with a similar length and width is required to adequately house one or two adults. The base of the enclosure may be covered in a substrate of coco-peat (available from garden supply shops) to a depth of at around 5cm. While substrate of this type is not essential, it will accommodate breeding. Sticks and branches should be placed within the enclosure as they are required for the insects to hang from whilst moulting.

**Temperature:** The safe range is 22 – 28° C, but will tolerate periods of cooler temperatures (overnight lows) of 12°C as long as the temperatures rises back into the safe range during the day. Cooler temperatures will result in a slower growth rate.

**Life span:** 12-18 months.

**Handling:** Not recommended. They are a little nervous and unpredictable and may leap away without warning. They also have powerful mandibles, and although not aggressive large specimens could inflict a painful bite if handled roughly.

**Reproduction:** These katydids can be housed in groups as long as the enclosure is large enough so that individuals are not crowded together. Regular observation is required to avoid potential issues. Mature males will call by rubbing specialised parts of their wings together, thus attracting willing females. The male will deposit a spermatophore whilst his abdomen is locked with hers. A week or two after mating the female will begin laying individual eggs into the substrate. The eggs are rice-like in appearance, and will usually hatch a few months after being laid. The hatchling katydids are hardy, but are relatively slow growing and take many months to mature.

**Common issues:** If keeping these katydids in groups of high numbers, you may find that some individuals are injured or disrupted during the delicate moulting process. If this happens, your katydids will need more space, so divide your group into multiple enclosures.

**NOTE:** These animals are captive bred, and should not be released into the wild.

For more information contact Minibeast Wildlife at [info@minibeastwildlife.com.au](mailto:info@minibeastwildlife.com.au)